

May 30, 2002

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Subject: Re-designation of Urban Area for Rural Health Care Program in the Pacific Insular Areas

Dear Madam Secretary,

The Department of Public Health and Social Services is in full support of the comments of the Governor of Guam regarding the redefinition of Honolulu as the urban center for Guam for the Rural Health Care Program.

Recent terrorism events have shown that vital telecommunications services can be used to warn our citizenry thereby reducing loss of human lives. Also, considering vast distances between Guam, the U.S. mainland and other Pacific Islands, any discounts in telecommunications could provide for significant cost savings and improvement in the delivery of public health services.

Providing more affordable telecommunications between Guam and the several medical centers in Hawaii would mean that much-needed improved telemedical services could be implemented, which would result in faster turnaround in diagnosis and cost savings for off-island medical transfers. Low cost communications between Guam and the State of Hawaii Telemedicine Network (STAN) would also provide a unique opportunity to develop distance education programs to train our local healthcare force and improve our capacity to care for our patients locally.

The Department of Public Health and Social Services has been working for over a year now with Guam Memorial Hospital, the University of Guam and the medical community to develop such services. Our Health Alert Network would include neighboring islands and our telecommunication capacities with the Laboratory Response Network would be upgraded. Several of these projects could finally be implemented with the noted expected outcomes if affordable telecommunications are available through the re-designation of Honolulu as the urban center for Guam.

If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at (671) 735-7102 or Mr. Enrique F. Torres, Program Coordinator IV, at (671)735-7306.

Respectfully submitted,

DENNIS G. RODRIGUEZ
Director